

# Opportunities for the New Urban Agenda

Workshop, 15 July 2015 – Brussels

## Moderator's Conclusions

*Following up on a request of the Cities Alliance interim board member Germany, the Cities Alliance Secretariat convened a workshop on July 15<sup>th</sup> to elaborate on the content and context of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), and discuss the process and mechanisms of implementation and review. The workshop was attended by the Cities Alliance Secretariat and members of the management board, as well as members and partners of the Joint Work Programme in support of Habitat III, including Brazil, France, Germany (GIZ, BMZ), UCLG, UN-Habitat, Habitat for Humanity International, DFID and SDSN. The workshop was moderated by Alexander Carius, Director of adelphi, and held under Chatham House Rule. The workshop helped clarify expectations on the NUA and identify key points of action.*

### The New Urban Agenda in the global context

2015 is a pivotal year for sustainable development. The outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD), the United Nations Summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP21 will shape sustainable development for the coming decades. Habitat III will also be significantly influenced by the outcomes of these global processes. Moreover, political commitment for Habitat III is currently eclipsed by the focus on the sustainable development goals (SDGs), FfD and UNFCCC processes. While interest is likely to increase after COP21, workshop participants agreed that this is too late to increase visibility of Habitat III, and that **the process should now be strengthened.**

### Recommendations for the New Urban Agenda

The abovementioned global processes lack an articulate vision on the future of cities which goes beyond a list of sector-specific targets and indicators. Participants were concerned that in the absence of such a vision, Habitat III would fail to garner sufficient international attention. Participants recommended that:

► **The NUA should formulate an *aspirational vision* to guide sustainable urban development for the next 20 years and to help mobilize actors on this issue.** ◀

The New Urban Agenda can moreover play an important role in interpreting and complementing the urban dimension of the SDGs. The likely inclusion of a dedicated cities goal (SDG11) indicates recognition of their importance. Participants emphasized that as there are many other goals, targets and indicators which relate to urban development, progress towards sustainable development depends on the integration of urban issues across the entire SDG framework.

► **The NUA should apply an *urban 'lens'* to the SDGs by addressing the challenges, opportunities, policy options and strategies for implementing the SDGs in an urban context.** ◀

Participants moreover agreed that the implementation and review mechanisms of the New Urban Agenda are of fundamental importance for its political relevance.

► **The NUA should prioritize the creation of *enabling conditions* for cities.** ◀

Participants highlighted several specific contributions that the NUA could make:

Firstly, discussions on the New Urban Agenda need to clarify how it will address, involve and commit urban actors beyond the national governments involved in the UN negotiations, including regional and local governments, civil society and the private sector. Participants were concerned about this issue considering the current lack of clarity regarding stakeholder participation in the preparatory process. The NUA should help make the development of cities more **participatory and inclusive** by involving the wide range of stakeholders that will be important for implementation of the NUA.

Secondly, **enhancing capacities at the city level** will be essential for implementation of the NUA. Implementation partnerships – between national and local governments, civil society, public-private partnerships, international networks, etc. – can mobilize know-how, funding and capacity. The NUA should define which stakeholders and institutions need to be involved for effective implementation, and which multi-level governance structures are needed for such partnerships to function.

Thirdly, implementing sustainable urban development requires effective **financing mechanisms**. A dedicated Habitat III policy unit examines municipal finance and local fiscal systems. Its focus should be expanded to incorporate proposals for innovative financing models and an in-depth examination of financing opportunities of the NUA as such, through the private sector, international banks, foundations, and others.

Fourthly, workshop participants stressed the importance of **national urban policy frameworks** in shaping sustainable urban development, and defining actors' roles, mandates and responsibilities especially on the subnational level, based on the subsidiarity principle.

Lastly, workshop participants highlighted the importance of **monitoring, reporting and review mechanisms**. The complementarity between the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda will also extend to monitoring. Where possible, it is thus advisable to streamline monitoring of the NUA with the SDG

process. Discussions on monitoring and review also need to consider the frequency and platform for implementation progress reviews. Regular review cycles – every 4-6 years – are needed to identify and respond to implementation gaps in a timely fashion. Review summits could be incorporated into an existing platform, such as the World Urban Forum. Workshop participants recommended that the review process involve local governments, the private sector and relevant stakeholders from the onset. This increases accountability, transparency and ownership of the implementation, monitoring and review processes.

### Way forward

Participants appreciated the strategic and comprehensive discussion on the purpose and implementation of the NUA and emphasized the need to continue this dialogue within the Cities Alliance as well as with the Bureau of the preparatory committee and the Habitat Secretariat.

► *Participants recommended that the mechanisms for **coordination among the policy units** are elucidated, and that the scope of their work is expanded to **incorporate the implementation arrangements** discussed above. ◀*

Workshop participants identified policy units 3 (national urban policies), 4 (urban governance, capacity and institutional development) and 5 (municipal finance and local fiscal systems) as particularly fundamental for designing an overarching enabling policy and strategy framework for cities and developing innovative financing models. These policy units should be tasked with identifying a limited set of key enabling conditions needed to ensure implementation of the NUA.

► *Participants emphasized that the New Urban Agenda requires strong **mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and review**. ◀*

The Cities Alliance will offer support to the Bureau by providing inputs to the drafting of the NUA, particularly with respect to these issues.

The CA joint work programme on Habitat III will moreover discuss and **elaborate additional proposals to stimulate the debate**.